

23. Action at Natchez, Va., by Cav. of the Army of Va.

Nothing But Flags.

[By the late Moses Oakes, Bath, Me.]

Nothing but flags—yet, methinks, at night
They tell each other of the things that might
Tattered and torn and hanging in rags;
And we walk beneath them with careless tread,
Thinking of the things that have been said
That have marched beneath them in days gone by
With a burning cheek and a kindling eye
And have bidden their folk with their young
A life, And, dying, blessed them; and, and, blessing, died.

Nothing but flags—yet, methinks, at night
They tell each other of the things that might
And dim spectres come and their dim ear twine
Round each standard torn as they stand in line
And the dim light is as the light of a farm
And the dim hull rings with the battle's storm
And once again through the smoke and strife
They tell each other of the things that might.

Nothing but flags—yet they're washed with tears,
They tell of triumphs, of hopes, of fears;
Of a mother's prayers, of a boy's awe,
Of a parent's cry, of a soldier's cry,
Silent, they speak, and the tear will start
As we stand beneath them with throbbing heart.
As we think of the things we've seen, forgot;
Their flags come home—why come they not?

Nothing but flags—yet we hold our breath,
And gaze with awe at those types of death
That tell of loving and loving and love,
The heart must pray though the lips be dumb
They are sacred, pure, and
Those dear loved ones at home again;
Baptized in blood, our purest, best;